

31. The Impact of Coaching on the People in Our Lives
with Sarina and Nikhil DePalma



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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Michael: Hey everyone, and welcome to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. So happy to have you back here with us today, and welcome of course to my cohost Arpita. How are you?

Arpita: I am great, Michael. How are you doing?

Michael: Doing great. And you know, in the intro to our show, we always talk about doctors and the people that love them. And the truth is, we have not had any episodes that just revolve around people that aren't physicians and how they have been impacted by the work that we have done in our lives. And so we have a couple of special guests here with us today and I am gonna let you introduce them cuz I think you know them pretty well.

Arpita: I would hope so. Right? Well this is a very special episode for me too because I've got my two little minions here, my two little kiddos. And they're not quite so little anymore, for sure. We have Serina DePalma, who is my oldest firstborn daughter. She is a sophomore, well actually now rising junior in college. And then I also have my lovely little son here, Nikhil DePalma, who is a rising senior in high school. So I'm gonna let them tell you guys a little bit about themselves first before we get started. But I'm really excited and thankful that they agreed to do this. I asked them, I didn't tell them. And they have, I think, a little bit to share with how things have changed. So I thought it would be a great episode to get a perspective from somebody near and dear to our heart. So Serina, why don't you start and tell 'em a little bit about yourself.

Sarina: Hi, I'm Serina, like my mom said, I'm a rising junior at the University of Tennessee. I'm studying architecture with a minor in graphic design, and I'm really liking that so far. On the side I like to do like some custom type work. Like, I like to do a lot of painting and like sketching and just kind of some creative type things. And I also have started enjoying cooking and stuff recently, which my mom has come to really enjoy, so that's, that's fun.

Arpita: But it's been awesome. We come home and she's making up an amazing meal and she does it so quick. I'm like, can you teach me how you're doing this? It's so, so good. Nikhil what about you? What do you want people to know about you?

Nikhil: My name's Nick. I am a rising senior at collegiate school here in Richmond. I like physics and math in school and outside of school. I like to fish and hang out with my friends and just relax. I also play football. I'm the kicker on the football team for our school. Yeah, That's about it.

Arpita: Well that's great. I appreciate it. Well, thank you guys both for coming on and I know, I think you might have had a little bit of apprehension here and there, but we appreciate you coming on and sharing. So we're gonna just kind of keep this conversational style and I'm gonna let Michael Hersh ask you some questions and I might jump in and ask some questions and we'll kind of go from there. Sound good?

Sarina: Yeah

Michael: So what kind of memories do you guys have of your mom from growing up? Like, do any, anything in particular stand out about what growing up was like?

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Nikhil: Well, for me, feel like she would get angry quickly.

Arpita: The first thing that you say she would get angry. My memory from growing up is that my mom would get angry quickly. Awesome.

Nikhil: Like when it was with homework or like schoolwork and I would just be not paying attention really. Or I would just do something really stupid. Yeah. I feel like that she would get mad, but now, now it's good.

Arpita: Do you have any other memories of childhood other than mom being angry?

Nikhil: Well, yeah. She used to make these honey buns that were really good.

Arpita: Don't make them anymore.

Nikhil: We sometimes make them. It's a lot of work. Okay.

Arpita: What about you, Sarina, what memories do you have of childhood and growing up?

Sarina: I remember like whenever we'd have a babysitter during the day, I would just get really excited when you and DePalm would come home. That was just like, it was just always exciting to be able to share everything we were doing with the babysitter, with you. And then I remember like when, when you would help me with my homework, sometimes I would get like really frustrated if I couldn't figure something out. And you always like knew how to do everything. Like you always just knew like how to do everything right and you knew what we were doing. Even if we were like telling a little fib or something, like you always just knew, like mom knows all. So that was just kind of something that I always, I just keep in the back of my mind.

Arpita: And you couldn't get away with anything is what you're saying.

Sarina: Yeah. I do remember that I felt a lot of stress, like on my shoulders with school and stuff, especially like with academics, just making sure I was doing everything I could and like always having to ask myself like what else I could be doing. Just in order to like put myself in the best position for the future. So it always felt like I was kind of reaching towards a goal, like always trying to work towards something. So,

Arpita: yeah. Yeah.

Michael: Did you think that that was something that you were kind of putting on yourself? Do you feel like that was like pressure that you were feeling? Why do you think you felt so much kind of push and stress to achieve the next thing?

Sarina: I think more so in high school it felt like I was doing all of this work to be able to get into college, and I felt like I was doing everything I felt that I needed to be doing, but then there would be some push from like my mom and my dad to do like the next step. Like figure out what else I could be doing to get myself in an even better position. And now I think it's changed because I think they just kind of know that, and they trust that I have the same drive to put myself in the best position for myself and I can, so there's less of a push from

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them in a sense that they don't think that I'm doing everything I can be like, I feel like now they know that I am. So I think that kind of drive to do what I, everything I can for myself has kind of been recognized from them and me, just that they know that I have the same drive and that I want to push myself just as much as they want to push me. So,

Arpita: And I think a part of that that we don't recognize necessarily when it's happening is that we think that our kids and their successes and their accomplishments are a reflection of ourselves, right? And so a lot of times I remember feeling when you were younger, I talk about this, I think in other episodes and even in some of the talks that I do that, you know, the feeling of disappointment when you guys didn't get an award or didn't do something at school or whatever. It wasn't really disappointment in you guys, it was more disappointment that I didn't parent the best that I could, that it's a reflection of me. And so really starting to have the awareness around that, that that's not really accurate. That's not the case. Like you guys are your own little human beings that create what you are wanting to create for yourselves and your lives, and your dad and I have offered everything we can to help put you in the best position to do that. But really from there, anything that you accomplish or don't accomplish is not really a reflection on us. It's a reflection on you. And that's good. That's good and bad and that's okay. That's how it's supposed to be.

And just so the listeners can get the context ArPete is my little nickname, and DePalma is my husband's name for the kids. That's literally what they call us. So it goes from mommy and daddy to mom to dad, sometimes to Bruh to random nicknames. And so just so you know, as you're growing up with your children, be prepared for that. You're gonna have a whole slew of names that make absolutely no sense, but they're cute, they're pet names now. So

Michael: what about you Nick? Like what have you kind of noticed through all of this, I know both of your parents have kind of engaged in coaching and kind of more personal development and learning. So what have you noticed, cuz you're the younger one, you're still at home, so you may have more exposure to them on a daily basis.

Nikhil: So most of the time Sarina's gone because she's at college. So it's just me with these two. It's just like I get a hundred percent of the attention with them, but I've noticed that they're a lot more like calm and relaxed and like when situations happen, whether it's like with the office that they're working on or just something random with me, they don't freak out as much. They don't get as like uptight and angered almost. It's just more calm and relaxed and they just like go with it like it happens. And they just keep moving on. But they can, like from time to time they can still get flustered, but then they take a couple moments and they calm back down, which is something they didn't used to do. So it's good. Yeah, that's good.

Sarina: That's like something I noticed when I come home too. It's, it's just like, there'll be something that inflames you like with work or something like that and you guys come home and start talking about it and you just, from both parties, you just kind of feel like the tension rising cuz you're both like upset about something and you're both talking about it and how it upset you. But then you notice that instead of keep pondering over it and talking about it for like hours and hours. You guys just like kind of recognize what you're doing and how it's like affecting you and how you don't want it to like affect the rest of your night and what you're doing with your kids and what you're doing for dinner and stuff. So you just like let it go and that's like the biggest thing I've seen is just letting it go and not letting it like trump everything else that you want to do.

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Arpita: I think that's what used to happen a lot before and then that's where I think a lot of the anger, and just to make clear, it wasn't necessarily that like your dad and I were angry at each other. We were angry at situations that had come up for us and thoughts that we're rehabing, if we're talking about from a coach lingo, things would happen. We would've thoughts about it that would make us angry and then we would react with how we were showing up with each other. And we've gotten to be a little bit more mindful of choosing the discomfort that we want to be in. Do we wanna sit here and ruin the evening and be screaming about something and let these situations take over for the night such that we can't even interact with our families the way we want? Or can we just recognize that this is a circumstance or might be different ways we can think about it and we're choosing to focus our energies the way we want with you guys instead. So if you guys could like, think of for each of you specifically a situation or the way maybe myself or dad used to handle things with you that you really don't feel like was a good way to handle it.

Sarina: I think one thing for me, like how you reflected your feelings. With how you like handled situations with me was like in middle school and high school, when you were upset about something that came up with me, you would just kind of like shut me off from social media and like my phone and just like, take away all my technology and even just like at night when I would have to put my phone in your room and stuff like that. And then like when you would get upset about something and then you would like, take my phone away or not let me be able to interact with my friends or other outlets because you took my phone. And I think that was just some, like one example of how you kind of handled a situation that I didn't like because I just felt like you were kind of taking away one of my kind of outlets for getting out my own feelings and just kind of like, it just made me feel a little bit like restricted in the sense that I couldn't really have a safe kind of space for myself that I could reach out to other people or just kind of have some other outlet to kind of interact with someone else when something like that was going on. So that was one of the things I didn't like the most.

Arpita: Yeah, how would you have preferred that be handled?

Sarina: Well, I think there were like other ways to like, punish me in a sense, or just kind of like help me learn my lesson with whatever was going on other than taking my phone away. Cuz I still don't really understand what taking my phone away really did. Because it was just kind of like, oh, you enjoy your phone, I'm taking it away. Like it was just kind of like, if Nick really likes fishing, but he gets in trouble, you take away his fishing rod. Like, yeah. But I think the phone was just a bigger thing because it was just how I communicated with other people. And it was also like one of my, like if you think about your phone, that's like one of the things you rely on for a lot of things like. Like setting alarms in the morning or just like listening to music. Like I listen to music all the time. So yeah, like not having my phone as hard because I wouldn't be able to like do simple things like listen to music. So I think just there were other types of punishments in a sense that could have done a similar job that wouldn't have been as like harming in a sense.

Arpita: I think when I reflect back and I recognize that was my way of trying to retain any sense of control, right? And so that reflection of me thinking that by me doing this, I can control what you are and are not doing. That obviously was not true, but that's what my mindset was then. Right? And ultimately also not having the awareness that that's your outlet of how you could be able to process your emotions and your feelings and your thoughts around that, that I'm removing that. That wasn't really something that I was being very mindful of then. And I know, I can tell, like I remember the first year you came back from college, you still had a little, almost like P T S D from it, right? Because I can't remember we had some conversation and you brought it up

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and I could tell that you were still very hurt and angry about it. And so we kind of talked through it. And I think it's definitely changed now. You know, obviously we're not monitoring your phone or doing anything like that, but it was rebuilding that trust in a sense, from your standpoint, I would think that you would have to have more trust with us too. Mm-hmm. Nikhil, how about you? Any interactions or any situation that you can think of that we just failed at as being a parent at, in your opinion?

Nikhil: I mean, not really, other than you would just take something away when we did something bad. Like sometimes it'd be my Xbox or it'd just be something that I was like enjoying recently and you'd just be like, oh, it's gone. Because like if you did something wrong, you'd lose it for like a week or something. It worked maybe when we were like younger because you like really wanted that thing, whatever it was but as we got older, it didn't like do anything. It, it would just make us more mad. And then whatever we did wrong, we would just do more things wrong cuz it just like, kinda like, what's the point? Mm-hmm. But eventually, I feel like you realized that just taking things away doesn't too much.

Arpita: Yeah. And this is for the listeners to get an idea. We've got two very different kiddos here. We've got the first child type A, firstborn syndrome. And then we have the second child, total type B. And I always tell everybody he's our gift because nothing bothers him. Everything rolls right off his back. And living in a household of three type A, strong-minded individuals, I'm sure has not been easy for him, but with his type B happy, go-lucky, carefree personality, I think he's handled it really, really well. Yeah, so I, appreciate that. I think you guys are telling us some things about like how we did discipline. I guess to shift gears a little, what do you think has been the most impactful way that our interactions with you have changed, like me and dad with you guys over the past few years?

Sarina: I think the biggest changes kind of started happening when I left for school. Because that's when you kind of started your coaching and your like whole journey with all this stuff. So I think I saw the kind of changes more dramatically when I came home because it was kind of like a long period of time had gone by since I was with you, like every day. And so I would kind of see it more when I came home and it was easier for me to kind of notice. So I guess Nick could speak a little bit more towards what he saw kind of as a gradual change through his high school years, sort of. But for me, like when I came back from school and stuff, And just kind of saw like how you and DePalm would interact with Nick, just him going about his high school years. I just kind of noticed how you obviously want him to do well in school and do everything he can and like you said, he's more like relaxed and laid back and isn't like as Type A like you were saying. So he's more kind of enjoying high school. He's still like doing great and like getting good grades, but I don't think I see you being as like on him about doing everything and more and making sure that like he's doing everything the way that you want him to do it. Like he's still getting to do high school the way he wants to do it, and he is getting support from you and he is getting pushed from you to make sure that he's doing what he needs to be doing, but it's not like overwhelming. And so I think that's beneficial for him and just because of the way he is too.

But also just kind of in the way that I see, just like the overall interactions with you guys and with him, just kind of like with him going out with friends or just, like in high school when I would ask to like hang out with friends and stuff, I just felt like there was a little bit more of a kind of control that you wanted to have over the situation. Just wanting to know like everything you were doing and where we were gonna be, and like who was gonna be there, like all those kinds of things. And you still kind of do that with him. Like you wanna make sure that he's gonna be safe and like everything's gonna be okay. But I think there's a little bit more leniency

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just in the fact that you know that he's smart and responsible, and he is gonna make the right decisions. So you, you just kind of trust that he's gonna be okay if he goes out one night and hangs out with friends. You're not feeling the need to kind of know every single thing that's happening and like when they're leaving one place and going to the next place, like that kind of thing.

Arpita: So it goes back to that control. But How about with you though, specifically how do you feel our relationship has changed or you know, your ability to communicate with me and and with dad.

Sarina: I think like at the end of high school, I started opening up to you guys about certain things and just kind of like being more honest with you and just kind of telling you what, like I was feeling more and just kind of trusting that like, I'm still your kid, like you're not gonna hate me or whatever. You're gonna help me work through things and like be there to support me. So even though like it was a little bit scary at first to start telling you everything that was going on with me like after you started your coaching and stuff, I just couldn't noticed that like obviously you might get a little bit upset about certain things, but you're not gonna like lash out about anything. You're gonna listen and make sure that I'm okay and try to figure out what we can do to like work through whatever situation or even if it's not like anything bad, just like being more open and being more accepting of whatever I was talking about, even if it was something different than what you kind of imagine or have thoughts about yourself.

So I think since kind of my end of high school and going into college, I've felt a little bit more just comfortable talking to you guys about things. And also I because you've been doing all of this coaching and learning so many things, I feel like I've been able to ask you advice for like certain, like my anxiety type things that I was feeling at the end of high school. Just like with doing public speaking and especially with architecture, like doing all of my reviews and stuff like that, I think you're sort of coaching to me just on how to handle my anxiety and handle my breathing type things when I public speak. Those kinds of things were really helpful, so I appreciated that.

Arpita: How about you, Nick?

Nikhil: I noticed it more after Serina left for college.

Arpita: Do you think she was the problem? I'm kidding.

Michael: What just happened?

Nikhil: I think that you and De Palma both realize that the whole high school college process with you and Serina was not fun. And it was very stressful. You guys were like always arguing or upset about something.

Sarina: Like applying to college?

Nikhil: Like all of it. So cuz you had different opinions and it felt like she wanted to do something her own way, but you want it to be like what you wanted, but then it wasn't the same. But then I feel like you realize after that with me, that it's not gonna be what you want. It's gonna be what we want. And I feel like you you realized that and you've supported more with things that we are wanting to do with our journey. It's not like, I

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feel like in lower school, middle school, you'd always push us to do everything we could, to be like you, to be like top of our class, be really good at everything. But now you realize that we're not like you, we're different. So you're like helping us with our own journey and then especially when it was just you and DePalma and me, all you had was me. She was gone. So like it wouldn't be good if you're upset all the time.

Arpita: What's gonna happen when you graduate, Nick? Oh man.

Michael: You know, I've kind of just been like sitting and listening and taking all of this in and I think what comes up for me is that there is no manual that teaches us how to parent, right? So my kids are still pretty young, so I've got a nine year old daughter and a six year old son. And so as I'm listening to you, I'm projecting this conversation with my own kids, you know, 10 years from now and trying to imagine what their experience is gonna be like. And the truth is, we don't know kind of, I mean, parents are just trying to figure it out, just like our kids are trying to figure out their own way. And what I'm taking away from this conversation is, you know, figuring out how to trust your children, right? When your kids are little, when they're first born, you're just trying to show them all the things. Cuz honestly, when they're babies, they don't know anything, right? And so you have to show them everything so you have them on such a short leash. And then as they get older and they are becoming their own people, you do, you have to kind of give them an opportunity to grow and do their thing on their own terms. And it's learning how to not only trust your kids, but also trust in yourself, that you've done the best job you could as a parent to instill all of the values and everything that you want them to have before they go out in the world.

And I think it's a learning process for us too, as parents, cuz we don't know how to do any of this. So I really appreciate this conversation. It has really informed me of what I can do better. So my kids are just like the two of you. So my nine year old daughter is kind of very type A and does everything by the rules and maybe is a little bit more anxious and a little bit more of a worrier and always trying to plan. And then my six year old son, he is just, you know, free and just like unrestrained and just, you know, makes friends everywhere he goes. And I don't know if the kid has ever had a worry in his entire, you know, in his, in his six years of life. And so if, you know there's lots of physician parents that are listening to this, and so for those of us with young kids, what advice do you have for us from the perspective of our children who can't voice their own opinions right now? They're you know, they still require a lot more than the two of you, but over the next 10 years, what advice do you have for me?

Nikhil: I'd probably say that they are gonna do their own thing and want their own things. As they grow up and you can't try and mold them to be just like how you were growing up. You just gotta help them be who they wanna be.

Sarina: Yeah. And I think you just have to trust yourself also because, you just have to trust that you're a good person, so you're gonna like, create and raise a good person. You can't really do anything wrong. Like ArPete and DePalm didn't do a lot wrong. Like I'm so glad that they're my parents because I, especially going to college too and meeting so many people at college. You just kind of gain a broader perspective of the type of people there are out there. And it just kind of comes to show how proud I am of how I was raised and how like glad I am to be kind of grown up on the morals and the values that I have because of my parents. So even though there like were some bumps in the road, like I'm glad that they raised me way that they did. So I think

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the biggest thing I can say is just trust yourself because your kids will turn out great the way that you raise them. So,

Arpita: I'm glad I didn't fuck it up too much.

Michael: Well, I mean, I think the takeaway here is that you don't have to be a perfect parent and none of us is right? I'm certainly not. And your kids will turn out great regardless.

Arpita: I think I read somewhere or heard somewhere that you have to get it right 67% of the time, so as long as you get it right, 67% of the time, you're not screwing 'em up too much. So I'm hoping that we did that. And I'm gonna point out one thing, you know, that you were saying that they did a good job and raised us and I want you to know that ultimately, it's you guys, right? It's what you guys have chosen. We put it out there in the world for what we think would be awesome, but it's what you choose to take on and adopt for yourself. So give yourself credit for what you're choosing to do and what you're choosing to create and who you're choosing to be, because that's all you. And that's part of the shift of what we've had in for our own mindset, that you are not a reflection of us necessarily. You are your own people being able to create what you want for yourself.

I wanna just ask one more thing before we head out today. So, you know, we, I think you've seen the changes in us over the past couple years, and it's not like we're perfect. We still have setbacks. We all know that it happens here and there, but what have you taken from what you've seen us implement in our own lives to be able to implement in your own lives for yourselves? And what have you shared with others that you think might be helpful in impacting them too?

Sarina: I think the biggest thing that's kind of helped me with my relationships with people is just kind of that you can't set expectations for other people and you can't expect people to do things the way that you want them to. So you just kind of have to navigate your friendships and your relationships in a way that's gonna be beneficial and helpful to you and like whatever the other person's gonna choose to do, you can't let it be like a direct effect on how you view them or how you let it like affect your feelings because you can't set like a set of rules that they're gonna follow. They're gonna do things the way that they wanna do, and you can either choose to just kind of like accept that and love them for it, or you can just kind of like set boundaries and, well, you should always set boundaries, but yeah.

Arpita: I'm so proud of my mini me.

Michael: I mean my biggest takeaway from this episode, because sometimes we question like all this work that we're doing and the coaching stuff and all that, and my kids have been a huge reason why I have kind of gone so hard into coaching, and I think what I am taking away from this conversation is I am right on track, right? Because the stuff that we learn and we bring home continues to have impact and that's, you know, we get to show our kids that there's another way. And from this conversation, that's exactly what I'm taking away. You guys have seen it in your parents and now you are actually building it into your own lives too. And I think as a parent, that's all we can ever want for our kids. Yeah.

Arpita: Nick, how about you? We'll wrap it up with you. Tell us.

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Nikhil: I feel like the way that you've started to live from like coaching is how I've always lived. It's like, it's like I'm like always so chill and relaxed and you know, you just gotta roll with the punches. That's my famous quote. That's how like me and my friends work. Like we've had, I've had a tight group of friends since middle school, and so like, I've never like had to worry about my friends, like going behind my back or doing something bad. We've always just been like close. So I mean that's definitely allowed me to be like more. Like free, like just like be who I am, like careless almost, but

Arpita: Like not careless. Like carefree.

Nikhil: Yeah. But like that's what also helped me pick out, like find these friends. Like we all have the same hobbies and do the same things and love hanging out with each other. Like Cooper, my, one of my friends this whole week, he helped drive me to work every morning and it was like, I didn't realize it till the end of the week, but it was so much fun, like driving with him to work every morning and then back from work every morning. It was just good to be around him, but I didn't realize it. It's just kind of something you see after. So I think that if everybody is just more chill and relaxed and like just let things happen and life will be better.

Sarina: This is one thing I can attest to because Nick, it's so funny when I like first came home from college after being away for a while, just the way that Nick interacts with ArPete and DePalm is so funny cuz they'll get upset with him about something or you'll just like feel the tension rise cuz ArPete gets upset that he didn't like clean his room or like do something she told him to do like five times and she's getting actively upset with him. And he just brushes it off and just like makes a joke and absolutely puts them in their place and they just can't do anything but laugh and it's so funny and just like completely turns the situation around. It's hilarious.

Arpita: My gosh. All right, so Nicks mantra is roll with the punches. Things are swell. Serina has no expectations of other people or very low expectations and has her boundaries. We're living it up that way. Awesome. All right, well thank you for coming on and sharing your wisdom with the listeners so they can kind of hear your perspective over the past couple years, how things have changed. I think for parents that are out there just knowing that we are doing our absolute best and our best is good enough, and even if we're getting it right, only half of the time, you know, having faith that what we're putting out there is being absorbed and that these minions are their own people and they're able to create their lives for themselves and everything is happening exactly how it's supposed to and it's all gonna work out. So

Michael: And I think and trusting yourself and trusting that you've done a great job with your kids and learning to trust them as they get older. I think that's all we can really hope for. And so this was a great conversation. We really appreciate you guys coming on and sharing all of your experiences with the listeners. And thanks to all of you for listening and we'll see everybody next time on the next episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Take care.

Arpita: Bye.